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FRIENDLY CAUTION
AGAINST
R A S H
AND
UNCHARITABLE
J U D G I N G.

*With what Judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.
Mat. vii. 2.*

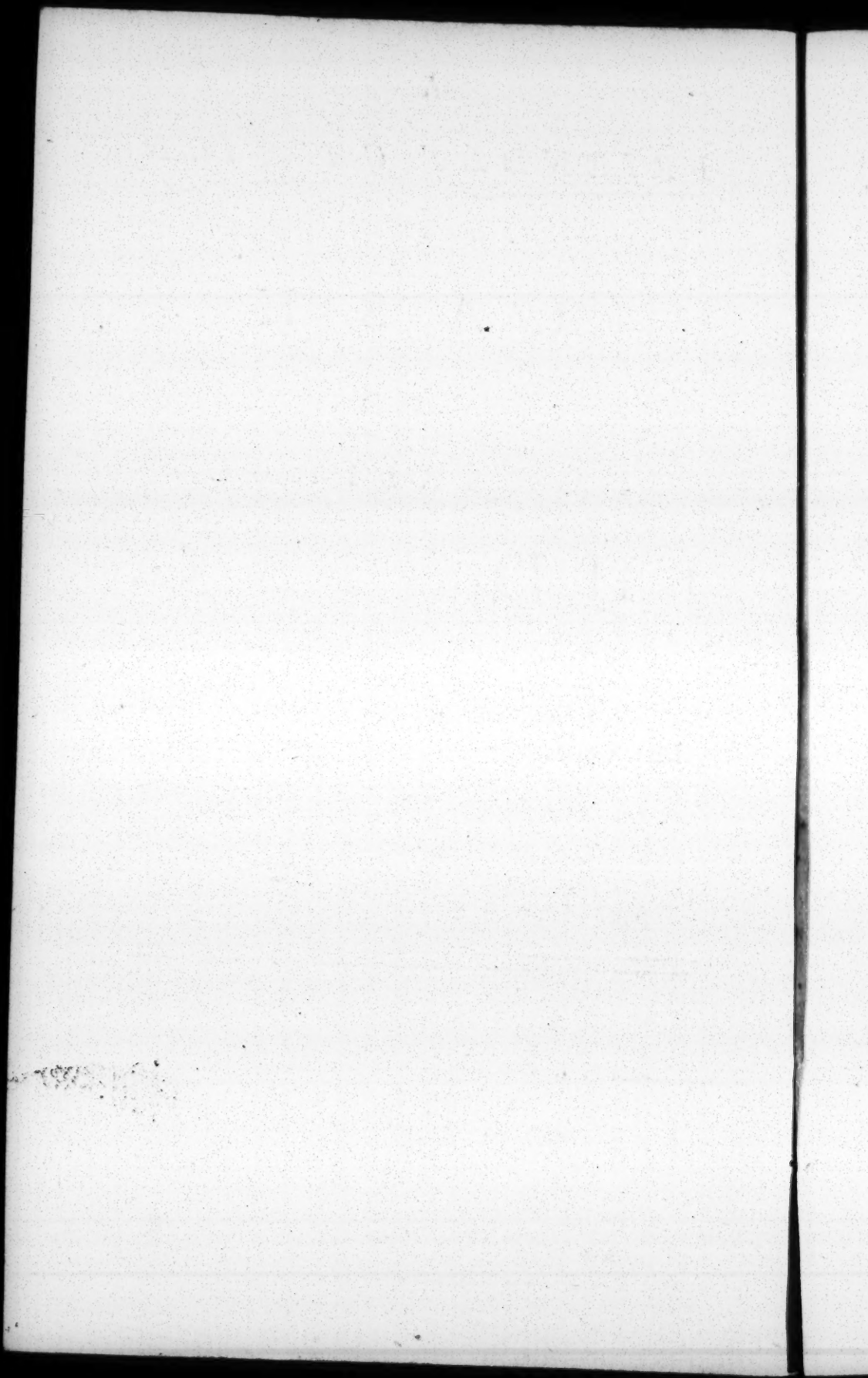
*Thou art inexcusable, O Man, whoever thou art that
judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou con-
demnest thyself; for thou that judgest, doest the same
Things. Rom. ii. 1.*

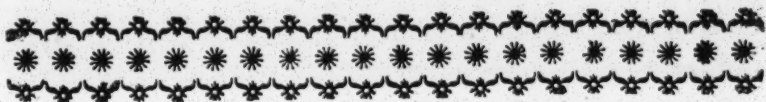
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FRIENDLY CAUTION, &c.

 *J*UDGE not that ye be not judged (a); says our blessed Lord in his Sermon on the Mount. And there is not a more distinguishing mark of real Christianity than the observance of this command, nor a more evident proof of a reprobate mind than where no regard is paid to it.—Let a man make what pretensions he will to Religion, let him fancy himself possessed of a sanctity as far above his Neighbours as he pleases, yet if at the same time he harbours in his breast a spirit of uncharitableness, and vents this spirit in rash judgment upon others, arrogantly and presumptuously taking upon him the office of the searcher of hearts, that man's Religion is vain; he

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is

(a) Mat. vii. 1.

is deceiving his own Soul, and would do well to consider whether he himself is not in danger of those anathemas, which he is so liberally bestowing upon others.

This being premised, it will be proper to examine (according to the import of Scripture) wherein candid and charitable judging consists, as also what is meant by its opposite, rash and uncharitable judging.

That charity then, or love, (for so the word in the original signifies) which St. Paul tells us *hoppeth all things, is kind, and thinketh no evil* (b), is a truly humbling grace; and as it always makes a man think lowly of himself, so it will always put a favourable construction where the nature of the case will allow it; particularly as it regards the spiritual state of others, charity is always inclinable to hope and think the best, and will ever be ready to *cover the multitude of Sins* (c), (i. e.) to make allowances for manifold failings and imperfections, and to draw over them the veil of love, knowing that such may be, and frequently are found, where nevertheless there may be a sincere heart at the bottom. — Nor will Charity confine this kind, loving, disposition to any Sect or Party, but is as extensive as the East from the West, doing good unto all, enemies as well as friends, both to the Soul and to the

(b) 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 7

(c) 1 Pet. iv. 8.

the Body, but especially to the former, as infinitely the more valuable.—And as it *envieth not, neither rejoiceth in iniquity, but in the truth*(d), so wherever it discovers the genuine marks of truth, grace, and goodness, it is always ready to acknowledge and love them; and is as unwilling to offer the *least* injury, as it is disposed with all patience and long-suffering to overlook and pardon the *greatest*.

The contrary of this temper consists in unkindness, bigotry, envyings, and evil surmisings; and will discover itself by taking words and actions in the worst light where a more favourable interpretation may be put upon them.—By seeking handle to carp or find fault. — By condemning people unheard, or eagerly listening to the world's prejudices against them.

An uncharitable temper shews itself in a still higher degree, when it takes occasion of rejoicing in or aggravating the slips and infirmities of others, especially those that are religious, and when it is more unwilling to hear what may be offered in vindication of them, than of such as have no religion at all; pronouncing all that shew an hearty zeal for God to be Enthusiasts or Hypocrites, on account of the forged or real faults and imprudencies of some.

But the very worst degree of uncharitableness is when persons take a pleasure to pick faults in others;
and

(d) 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 6.

and overlook all their graces from a secret consciousness of their higher piety, that thereby they may set the world against them, or quiet their consciences by endeavouring to bring them down to their own level; and whilst they will not suffer themselves to be judged by the constant course of their lives, scruple not to sit in judgment upon a sincere Christian for any one particular failing they can lay hold on.—Such a disposition as this, is truly diabolical.

Having laid before you some of the Scripture-characteristics of *true evangelical charity*, (extracted chiefly, as the Reader will easily perceive, from the 13th Chapter of St. Paul's 1st Epistle to the Corinthians,) and of its opposite temper, *Uncharitableness*, or *rash judgment*; you may see what exceeding false and delusive notions the world in general are too apt to form of *charity*, as opposite from what it really is, as light is opposite from darkness, frequently condemning those as *uncharitable* who have the only *true Charity* described in the word of God, and calling those *Charitable* who are destitute of every spark of that divine grace.

For instance, some absurdly confine the idea of charity wholly to Alms-giving, which indeed is a branch of it, when accompanied with the before-mentioned marks, and when done from the principle of *faith working by love* (e); but when it proceeds
from

(e) Gal. v. 6.

from any other motive, and is not attended with humility, meekness, long-suffering, love for souls, &c. it is so far from being that charity described in the Gospel, that *tho' a man should give all his goods to feed the poor, and even his body to be burned, it would profit him nothing, he would be but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal* (f). Yet any one would be looked upon as exceedingly *Uncharitable* that should call in question the safety of a person's state who was thus liberal in Alms-giving, even tho' in other respects he was *walking after the course of this world, and not after Christ* (g).

Again, those pass for very *charitable* people in the world's account who take it for granted that almost every body, (especially in a Christian Country) goes to heaven; and when they hear of the death of any of their carnal acquaintance bring out some such expressions as these; “ Ah poor man, to be sure he
 “ has shortened his days by drinking, and he loved
 “ his bottle to the last; but he was a constant
 “ Church-man, had a great many good qualities,
 “ was strictly honest between man and man, and
 “ was nobody's enemy but his own, * there-
 A 4 “ fore

(f) 1 Cor. xiii. 3. 1.

(g) Eph. ii. 2.

* It has been remark'd by a pious Author, that to say a wicked man is nobody's enemy but his own, is just as absurd as if we were to affirm, that a good man is nobody's friend but his own; and if we consider the pernicious influence of a bad example, we cannot but admit the truth of his observation.

“ fore God forbid that I shou’d be so *uncharitable*
 “ as to doubt of his happiness.”

Another perhaps (let us suppose a Lady) is long confined by a complication of distempers, and during the whole course of her illness shews no sense at all of her lost estate by nature, no hungrings and thirstings after Christ, and no desire to converse with those about her on the Affairs of her Soul; but on the contrary, makes her sick-bed attendants tell her all the news of the Neighbourhood, read to her books of plays and novels, or at best of history, and must have parties at cards every day to amuse her, till she grows so bad as to be utterly unfit either for her books, cards, or tittle tattle, when perhaps the Parish Minister is sent for, who reads over the visitation of the sick, and gives her the Sacrament, and then the poor creature languishes for a day or two and dies.

Now what is the usual language upon such occasions? Why “ poor woman, tis happy for her
 “ she is releas’d, she died very resign’d, and is gone
 “ to a better world.”—Reader, I say, didst thou never hear such horrible speeches as these upon such occasions? and yet this is what the world calls CHARITABLE JUDGING.—But certain it is that whoever presumes to adopt such language, (whatever he may think of the matter) has but just *Charity* enough to make God a Liar, and all the threatnings of his word to be nothing but mere bluster.—For example,

ample, The scripture says that *he that believeth not shall be damned* (k), that *except ye repent ye shall all perish* (l), that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord* (m), that *if any man hath not the spirit of Christ he is none of his* (n), that *he who committeth sin is of the Devil* (o), and that *no Drunkard, &c. shall inherit the Kingdom of God* (p).—But you hear of people dying in a State of sin and insensibility, consequently without true faith, repentance or holiness, and yet on account of some fancied excellencies in them say, “you doubt not of their happiness.”—Now what is this but to make the word of God of none effect, and openly to declare your dissent from it.

Moreover God's word declares, *that many are called but few chosen* (h), *that wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat, because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it* (i). — But you say it is *uncharitable* to affirm that God will damn the greatest part of his Creatures, and won't believe any such thing.—Here then you see you set up a Judgment in direct opposition to what Christ himself has declared, and charge his expressions with *uncharitableness*.

Again

- (h) Mat. xx. 16.
- (k) Mark xvi. 16.
- (m) Heb. xii. 14.
- (o) 1 John iii. 8.

- (i) Mat. vii. 13, 14.
- (l) Luke xiii. 3.
- (n) Rom. viii. 9.
- (p) 1 Cor. vi. 10.

Again they are looked upon as *very charitable Judges* (tho' their *charity* may be compared to that of a man who whilst his brother is lying in a ditch passes by on the other side) who instead of endeavouring to promote the Salvation of their Neighbours, say "they wou'd not for the world suppose any of " their Souls to be in a *state of damnation*,"—— Whereas whoever has so much *real charity* as to be desirous of saving the souls of his fellow creatures, and will not cry peace peace to those who have *the form of Godliness without the power* (q), must expect to have the charge of *uncharitableness*, (and if he be a Minister, of *preaching damnation*,) thrown out against him; as if *charitable judging* consisted in putting out ones eyes, and setting up our own fancies in flat contradiction to the oracles of truth.

'Tis true, we are not rashly to determine what will be the final condition of any man living, for however destitute a person may at one time be of every appearance of grace, we know that the Almighty Spirit of God is able to effect a saving change upon him before he dies. Yet we may be assured that if this change is not wrought upon him in this life, if *he is not born again of the spirit* (r), *made partaker of a divine nature* (s), and *become a new creature in Christ Jesus* (t), (and whether he is or is not, may well be known by observing what fruits are produced in the life and conversation, according to

(q) 2 Tim. iii. 5.

(s) 2 Pet. i. 4.

(r) John iii. 5.

(t) 2 Cor. v. 17.

to what our Lord says, *by their fruits ye shall know them*) (u), I say if this is not done, we may be as fully assured that such an one must perish everlastingly, as that God himself is true, or that there is a hell and heaven for the righteous and the wicked.

To conclude. The Scripture, (our only safe Guide,) having commanded us *to try the spirits whether they are of God* (w), and having given us infallible rules for this purpose, by laying before us the distinguishing marks and characteristics of the children of God, and of the children of this world; the highest degree of uncharitableness we can possibly be guilty of is, when on the one hand we flatter with false hopes those in whom the scripture marks of a Christian are not to be found; and on the other hand condemn as Hypocrites, and *shoot out bitter words*, against such as (notwithstanding many failings) do still manifest themselves *to be born of God*; (x) and to *have overcome the world* (y).

(u) Mat. vii. 16.

(x) 1 John iii. 9.

(w) 1 John iv. 1.

(y) 1 John v. 4.

